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MAYOR TAKES SECOND OATH OF OFFICE, DELIVERS 2012 INAUGURAL ADDRESS

INDIANAPOLIS – Indianapolis Mayor Gregory A. Ballard today at the Indiana War Memorial took his second oath of office and delivered his 2012 inaugural address. The following is the text of the address, as prepared for delivery. Attached please find a fact sheet regarding today's ceremony.

"A Capital Moment for Indianapolis"

Madam President, distinguished members of our City-County Council, friends, family and guests, I am honored you are joining me today to welcome in this new year and to renew my contract of focused leadership with the people of Indianapolis.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank a great first lady for our city and my wonderful wife, Winnie. I would also like to recognize our children – Greg and Erica, dear friends, supporters and most of all, the people of Indianapolis. It is humbling to be rehired by the people as the Mayor of our great capital.

Indianapolis is truly a great capital – in all senses of the word.

Cartographers mark our city with a star because it houses the political seat of this great state. We hold the distinction of "amateur sports capital of the world" and the "racing capital of the world." Our city has long been recognized for its great human capital. And, over recent years, we have become a capital of thought in the areas of fiscal prudence, innovative partnerships, sustainability and, more recently, education reform and the unprecedented investment in our streets, sidewalks, bridges and parks in neighborhoods all across the city.

Now, history and opportunity demand we rise to our next capital challenge. 192 years after the state turned a swamp into a city, we stand poised to become a capital of more than just Indiana. Momentum and the fruits of decades of great leadership are converging at just the right time to lead us somewhere bigger. It is time to capitalize on this moment.

The landscape of our region looks markedly different from just a few decades ago. Indianapolis is now nationally recognized as a prime center for growth and opportunity. At the same time, many of the old capitals of industry are struggling under the weight of excessive spending and government that can no longer squeeze into that old rusty belt.

Indianapolis no longer fits that model. We are shaking the rust off that belt and tightening it. This city is living within its means and businesses are taking notice.

Last week, the business and personal finance publication *Kiplinger* named Indianapolis one of the top ten cities in the nation to start a new business. It described our entrepreneurial scene as “on the verge of making it big.”

Hundreds of years ago, cities sprang to life mostly due to the proximity of water – then the driving force of commerce. That is no longer the case. Modern cities don’t need harbors or ports to thrive. They need leaders who harbor great partnerships with business rather than rail against it and data ports that move ideas and money around the world at the speed of business.

Economics, not geography, will determine the capital of the new Midwest. The city that prepares will prosper. Indianapolis should seize this opportunity to become that capital. We can and should become the new model for urban success.

We are starting in a strong position, but we have more work to do.

First, let us recognize one of our strongest assets. Unlike many Midwest urban centers, Indianapolis does not face a mountain of bills from decades of bad decision making. In the coming years, our commitment to fiscal prudence and stability will provide a solid foundation of growth. The old capitals of power won’t be able to beg companies to ignore their financial malfeasance and remain in their cities forever. We look forward to welcoming those businesses to Indianapolis.

Second, we must prepare our neighborhoods to capitalize on the upcoming urban revival. Many experts believe the flight to the suburbs has reached its apex. The next great migration will be marked by a return to the city – and that means to many of our great historic neighborhoods. The Indianapolis of tomorrow must act now to provide the services and amenities that attract and support people seeking a return to city life.

Chief among these is education. The days that only a strong back determined your earning potential are gone. Strength of mind is now a better forecaster of future success. For the good of our community and our children, Indianapolis must raise its educational expectations – not just from our schools but from our students as well.

We must also invest in the basic framework of modern city living – that includes transit, greenways and parks. Entrepreneurs now do not move to a location for a particular job; first they pick the city they want to live in, and then they seize opportunity. This means we must make our city inviting to these new thinkers and doers. We must embrace our place in the global economy, celebrate our rich diversity and become a welcoming place for new residents, investment and ideas.

This goal is within our reach. Indianapolis has a long history of taking bold action to set the stage for future success. This city built a football stadium without a team. It supported the development of a downtown shopping mall at a time when urban retail was disappearing in most cities. More recently, we built a new airport, are in the process of building a new public hospital and are making unprecedented investments in our infrastructure, all because of the long-term benefits to our city.

Indianapolis is no stranger to taking big steps without a guarantee of success, but in order to do so many of the people in this room will need to work together to accomplish it.

The challenge in front of our great city is to capitalize on our momentum and do the things necessary to become the capital of the new Midwest. There is every reason to believe we can become a capital of commerce, a capital of urban progress, a capital of education reform, and a capital of leadership and thought.

As Mayor of this great city, I hope we recognize this moment. This is our time. This is our time.

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